

COUNTY NAME:

Kings County

CalWORKs County Plan Addendum

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I hereby certify that County Board of Supervisors was briefed regarding the contents of this Plan addendum prior to submittal.

  
County Welfare Director's  
Signature

Peggy Montgomery  
Printed Name

1-5-07

Briefing Date

This plan addendum is submitted pursuant to Welfare and Institutions Code Section 10534.

**1) County Goals - General description of how the county will meet the goals of W&I Code 10540**

The Kings County Human Services Agency (KCHSA) has developed this plan addendum to provide CalWORKs services as required by both the Deficit Reduction Act of 2006 and Welfare and Institutions Code 10540. The Agency has determined several goals and objectives to a successful operation of CalWORKs. The goals and objectives have been determined with consideration for the needs of the local indigent population and labor market. A full range of employment, training, education, supportive and counseling services is planned to meet the needs of our workforce-eligible participants, pursuant to available funding. These services and their development include the following:

- The continuation of voluntary up-front engagement activities, beginning with an orientation and appraisal within one week of applying for cash aid;
- Continued development and promotion of relationships with area employers, service providers, and other organizations;
- Linkage of our participants to local substance abuse and mental health providers, as needed, both during their time on aid and after time limits have been reached;
- Continued provision of supportive services provided to facilitate successful transitions from dependency to work, including child care and transportation;
- Continued promotion of training for staff related to Domestic Violence, Mental Health, Substance Abuse, and other relevant topics addressing participants' barriers to employment;
- Promote a strengths-based perspective where Employment and Training Services (ETS) employees help participants identify skills and capabilities that move them towards job-readiness;

- Increase efforts to avoid or cure sanctions of participants who are not participating or are struggling to fully meet participation expectations;
- Plan to develop relationships with local faith-based organizations to promote strong family values and positive youth activities;
- Plan to expand relationship with Kings View Mental Health to offer a greater variety of services, including marital/pre-marital counseling and possibly functional needs assessments.

## **2) Participation Improvement**

### **A. Providing up-front engagement activities**

#### **Current Policy**

KCHSA is already utilizing an up-front engagement program, which quickly engages applicants in CalWORKS programs. This up-front engagement begins with a voluntary orientation and appraisal of cash aid applicants, generally completed within one week of the initial application for aid. Up-front activities continue with Kings County's TIER (Techniques to Improve Employability and Retention) program or an individual job search activity for more job-ready participants.

An estimated 70% of participants move into either TIER or an individual job search activity as part of the up-front engagement process. The remainder generally have significant barriers to employment (homelessness, domestic violence, etc.) and are not ready to participate in a job search activity. These individuals are referred to available programs and services to begin addressing these barriers. KCHSA intends to continue promoting the process of initiating up-front TIER and job search activities as a successful component of its services.

KCHSA is continuing to improve overall Work Participation Rates (WPRs), having averaged 50% in recent months. Our current up-front activities not only rapidly engage the majority of participants in job search activities, but also help us identify exemptions and significant barriers to employment early in the aid process, allowing us to better serve clients and meet their needs.

### **Expanded Policy**

KCHSA will utilize the same methods that have yielded our high participation rates for two parent families, including direct job placement strategies with local partners, community colleges, employers and resources for removal of barriers to reduce sanctions and improve work participation rates.

It is anticipated that these strategies will impact 100% of new applicants. Refer to section 3 for a discussion of anticipated effects of policies and strategies on our WPR.

#### **B. Achieving full engagement by individuals who are required to participate, and who are partially participating, not participating, or are between activities**

### **Current Policy**

KCHSA will continue to strive towards full engagement by individuals who are required to participate. Staff will be encouraged to engage all individuals in activities yielding full participation, including: job placement; employment (both unsubsidized and subsidized); education and training directly related to local jobs; work programs linked through community colleges and other training processes; and community services at local private or non-profit employers (when directly linked to their job aptitudes and interests).

### **Expanded Policy**

To further increase full participation of those who are presently only partially participating, the HSA plans to improve interaction with clients to better identify and meet their needs. Workers will be made aware of new and ongoing volunteer/community service activities, as well as offerings by area community colleges and other vocational or educational institutions. In turn, workers will share these opportunities with participants, whereby they can jointly determine a plan of

action which will be of most benefit to the participant. It is expected that the client will be more likely to participate in an activity which he or she helps choose, thereby yielding increased rates of full participation.

KCHSA plans to improve utilization of its available case management tools (via its automated tracking system, ISAWS-WTW) to better identify participants who are between activities prior to the current activity ending. It is believed that if workers more proactively anticipate 'down time' between activities, participants can be contacted sooner and engaged in new activities immediately following cessation of the current activity. KCHSA plans to facilitate workers promoting such activities by hiring additional workers to decrease current caseloads, giving workers needed time to more closely monitor cases and anticipate client needs to help maintain participation rates between activities. With specific regard to students, workers will increase efforts to help participants find appropriate activities to meet participation rates during school breaks. These might include seasonal holiday employment, summer work study, continued coursework during summer session, or community service/volunteerism related to the course of study or well-suited to the participant's interests. KCHSA will work with area community colleges to develop effective ways to utilize the recently increased funding for work study.

### **New Policy**

KCHSA has recently developed "mini-groups" with our area mental health agency, Kings View. Without requiring full engagement in mental health services, participants can still benefit from the expertise of Kings View staff during short-term groups designed to fit around other work activities and provide available extra participation hours for those in need. The curriculum of available groups currently includes topics concerning domestic violence, anger management, substance

abuse, co-dependency, and parenting issues. Other groups are also available, and the curriculum continues to be expanded to meet our clients' needs.

Participants who are enrolled in a course of study at a community college who are not fully participating will be made aware of work study opportunities which can be used to provide additional core hours needed to meet participation requirements. Noncredit study time hours, whether supervised or unsupervised, will be counted as non-core hours of participation.

It is estimated that these strategies will impact 100% of our caseload monthly. Refer to section 3 for a discussion of anticipated effects of policies and strategies on our WPR.

**C. Providing activities to encourage participation and to prevent families from going into sanction status**

**Current/Expanded Policy**

Kings County HSA is committed to encouraging participation in CalWORKs programs and helping families avoid sanctions. KCHSA plans to bolster efforts to avoid sanctions by increasing personal contact with participants concurrent with initiating the sanction process. This will be accomplished by diligently making efforts to conduct visits with participants to discuss sanction consequences and alternatives while simultaneously assessing the client in the home and evaluating possible barriers to participation. The Agency is working to fill current vacancies, thereby reducing high caseloads and allowing staff time to more closely connect with clients and monitor participation. It is believed that with more staff and lower average caseloads, workers will be able to more effectively engage clients in activities, thereby reducing the need for sanctions.

## **New Policy**

As an additional incentive for clients to participate in CalWORKS activities, the county will re-implement a third-party payee for families remaining in sanction after three months of non-cooperation and unsuccessful attempts to re-engage, pursuant to our system's ability to implement such a program.

As part of an ongoing effort to provide participants with productive, individualized services, KCHSA is exploring the feasibility of acquiring the services of an Occupational Therapist to conduct Functional Needs Assessments and assist clients with applications for Supplemental Security Income (SSI). An Occupational Therapist (OT) is specifically trained to identify barriers to employment and ways to overcome them. While Employment and Training Services staff are trained to identify general barriers and assist participants, an Occupational Therapist has much more specific training to identify ways in which a particular client could be assisted. Furthermore, a Therapist could effectively serve as an SSI advocate, working with doctors and other health care professionals to help truly disabled clients obtain SSI rather than Welfare.

It is estimated that these strategies will impact approximately 50% of our caseload monthly. Refer to section 3 for a discussion of anticipated effects of policies and strategies on our WPR.

### **D. Reengaging noncompliant or sanctioned individuals**

#### **Current/Expanded Policy**

Kings County HSA recognizes the need to more proactively address sanctioned cases. While the Agency already has in place a policy to visit the home concurrent with sanctioning a client, this program will be expanded so workers will make every effort to see the client in the home within the first 90 days of the



sanction. If sanction rates are unacceptably high, KCHSA will consider having workers inquire why participants choose to stay in sanction status and evaluate what might be done to address the given issues.

### **New Policy**

KCHSA plans to evaluate each supervised staff unit as well as individual workers to better identify successful strategies for reengaging noncompliant or sanctioned individuals. By understanding effective techniques for our unique client base, we can strive towards an agency 'best-practice' and utilize effective approaches throughout the county.

Furthermore, it is believed that through this evaluation of current staff, we will identify one or more workers who are exceptionally talented in working with sanctioned and non-compliant clients. KCHSA plans to create a specialized caseload for sanctioned clients, and have that worker aggressively address reengaging sanctioned individuals, with particular attention paid to those clients in sanction for one year or less. This worker will also be identified as the contact person for individuals seeking to cure a sanction, and community outreach will be utilized as appropriate to help inform participants.

It is estimated that these strategies will impact approximately 15% of our caseload monthly. Refer to section 3 for a discussion of anticipated effects of policies and strategies on our WPR.

### **E. Other activities designed to increase the county's federal WPR?**

Kings County HSA plans to measure WPRs of staffed units and individual workers in an effort to identify internal best-practice approaches for our client population which could be used throughout the agency. The county will consider developing a plan to more frequently measure performance if doing so would help

us identify target areas for staff training to increase WPRs. The county plans to provide training to ensure both current and newly hired staff are familiar with state and federal changes and requirements, specifically focusing on differences between the two, so workers can help their clients meet participation expectations for both CalWORKs and TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families).

KCHSA plans to reinstate case staffing within the agency, whereby workers can bring difficult cases to a team of workers and supervisors from other units. The county has many seasoned and highly skilled workers, and it is believed that the agency, and the clients, will benefit from an environment in which this knowledge is openly shared. In the event that particular client concerns cannot be resolved within the agency, the county will consider re-implementing a Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT). This MDT would ideally be comprised of staff from Employment and Training Services, Mental Health, Child Protective Services, schools, and Public Health. The county is also exploring ways in which the services of an Occupational Therapist can be acquired; this individual would also be a valuable contributor to an MDT.

KCHSA will eventually convert to a new automated welfare system, C-IV, which will allow an interface for identifying families in the Child Welfare System, allowing workers from both Employment and Training Services and Child Protective Services to coordinate services in the client's best interests. Meanwhile, the HSA will explore ways to improve communication between these programs in order to more easily identify clients in common.

Refer to section 3 for a discussion of anticipated effects of policies and strategies identified in this addendum.

**F. Provide a description of how the county will collaborate with local agencies**

The county collaborates with a wide variety of local agencies which provide activities that meet federal work participation requirements and provide participants with skills which will help them achieve long-term self-sufficiency. Specific agencies interactions and plans for future collaboration follow:

- Local Workforce Investment Board (WIB): membership on the board, guiding actions and directions of local training, education and employment opportunities. Board regularly receives updates on economic development activities that could lead to additional opportunities for our participants. WIB is also utilized by linking with many of its members in the interest of expanding services for our participants. The agency representative will provide a regular printed update on ETS program performance and participation rates to assist WIB members in becoming more aware of program activities and their impact on its success.
- Community Colleges (CC): established service agreements with one local community college (West Hills College) to provide short-term, job training programs, specific to local labor market needs. The county has also co-located a ETS case manager at the CC to facilitate communication and services. The county plans to strengthen and expand linkages to a second CC (College of the Sequoias) in the interest of providing additional services throughout the county.
- Universities: established a service agreement with California State University, Fresno, to provide occupational specific testing and recommendations for education and training based on testing outcomes utilizing the "Work Keys" system. The county is considering an expansion of service agreement that could

be used to diagnose and recommend services for participants with functional learning disabilities.

- Adult Schools and Regional Occupational Programs (ROPs): continued involvement with all local adult schools and the sole ROP to provide basic education and short term job-specific training programs for our participants. The agency maintains a “school liaison” to monitor and encourage attendance, work with the school in developing any needed programs, and overcome barriers as they are detected. No area adult schools currently provide GED testing services, requiring the county to send participants to another county for testing. KCHSA has established conversations with Hanford Adult School in the interest of re-instituting this testing service.
- Kings Community Action Organization (KCAO): long-standing relationship with KCAO for the provision of child care resource and referral, child care payment services, domestic violence intervention, emergency food, clothing and shelter services for families in need. KCAO also provides the county’s Cal-Learn program services under the county’s sole Adolescent Family Life Program. KCHSA will continue to evaluate its services with local providers, including KCAO, to determine if additional services or funding are needed to improve access to services.
- Parole Outreach: established a relationship with the State Parole office who hosts outreach meetings of local service providers for recent parolees from state penal institutions. Agency representatives provide information on programs and services available to parolees and their families. KCHSA will continue to provide this service.
- Family Resource Centers (FRCs): continue to station eligibility staff at all local FRC’s to provide additional linkages to services and programs for local

residents. Most of the county's FRCs are linked to local elementary schools, providing additional connectivity to family-based services, including CalWORKs and ETS. KCHSA will continue to offer linkages to ETS services, and its partners, through outreach services at the FRCs.

- Faith-Based Providers: utilizes faith-based charitable organizations such as Salvation Army, St. Vincent DePaul Catholic Charities and other local Christian aid groups to provide emergency services for families in need. The county plans to contact local ministerial societies to renew efforts to coordinate services for ETS families, promoting marriage and family counseling services.

- Mental Health/Substance Abuse Counseling Services: maintain a service agreement with Kings View Mental Health Services to provide mental health counseling, short-term needs-based training programs to deal with parenting issues, domestic violence, improving families' life experience and other training programs as determined in conversations with staff. Additionally, Kings View provides services in several communities, linking with the county's remote offices in Corcoran and Avenal. Recently, a counselor began participating in KCHSA program orientations to provide an early linkage to their services and hopefully reduce any stigma associated with mental health or substance abuse services. The Agency is working with Kings View to provide additional life-skills-based programs ("mini-groups"), and expansion of this program is expected to continue.

Refer to section 3 for a discussion of anticipated effects of policies and strategies identified in this addendum.

### **3) Plan to measure quarterly progress**

Throughout this addendum, Kings County HSA has identified a number of programs and policies, which we believe will help improve participation rates. KCHSA has met the 50% participation requirement in the last quarter, so we do not want to radically change our approach and risk declining numbers. However, we anticipate a drop in the participation rate due to changes in how it is calculated (E2Lite). We will continue to monitor our participation rates using E2Lite data as a baseline, and we anticipate seeing a potential WPR increase of 1-3% each year during the next three years.

We expect to see this increase based on the cumulative effects of several strategies identified within this plan addendum. To measure our progress, we will begin tracking sanction rates in addition to overall participation rates. If we begin a third-party payee system for sanctioned individuals, we anticipate observing a noticeable decline in sanction rates. We will also monitor partial participation and clients who generally do not participate between activities and look for an improvement in participation among these clients by more fully utilizing community service opportunities, life skills activities, work study, etc. KCHSA has begun exploring ways to acquire the services of an Occupational Therapist; if successful, we anticipate having higher (and more rapid) success moving appropriate clients from welfare to SSI, as well as more accurately identifying and resolving barriers to employment for clients who are not participating or are only partially participating.

Furthermore, KCHSA plans to improve techniques to fully capture participation activities, involving education at the worker level to help staff fully understand participation criteria. It is expected that rates will continue to improve in part because activities which

have been overlooked or have failed to be identified and documented in the past will be captured.

#### 4) Funding

Describe how the county has spent and plans to utilize single allocation and other funding for the county's CalWORKs program. This section will help explain to county and State stakeholders how increased funding will be used.

<b>Program Component</b>	<b>Fiscal Year 2005-06 Actual Expenditures</b>	<b>Fiscal Year 2006-07 Budgeted Amount</b>	<b>Description of how additional funding provided in Fiscal Year 2006-07 will be used</b>
CalWORKs Eligibility Administration	1,755,249	1,823,245	Increase in funding will be used to add Eligibility Workers to assist in third party protective payees in ETS sanctions as an incentive to participation.
ETS	4,547,378	3,924,366	N/A
CalWORKs Child Care	1,839,181	1,631,604	N/A
Cal-Learn	127,117	222,922	To increase funding to our Cal-Learn provider that will enable added staffing and more intensive services designed to meet the goals of Cal-Learn.
CalWORKs Funded Mental Health Services	301,255	347,122	Fund additional "mini-groups" and Occupational Therapist services designed to move participants from sanctions and provide SSI advocacy.
CalWORKs Funded Substance Abuse Services	123,242	198,483	Provide added funding for counseling and residential services for participants with substance abuse issues.